

What is Claimed is:

1. A system wherein at least one purchaser places an order for at least one provider, and purchasers and providers are matched according to desired criteria, the system comprising:

a data storage device to receive purchaser information that specifies purchaser criteria, provider information that specifies provider criteria and order information that specifies the purchaser's criteria for that particular order;

a knowledge base containing information on which to base requests for information by the system to obtain the purchaser information, the provider information and the order information;

a virtual provider that is created by matching provider information of a particular provider with order information of a particular order; and

a scoring system that compares the provider information and the order information for the virtual provider and that determines a score reflecting the degree of matching between the criteria of the provider information and the order information.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the system considers the match of provider information and order information of the virtual provider through multiple steps, and wherein additional purchaser information and/or additional provider information is input into the system, further comprising:

a management system that tracks the virtual provider through the multiple steps; and

a sequencing system that specifies the contents of each step, the contents at least including instructions to the purchaser regarding the input of additional purchaser information or to the provider regarding the input of additional provider information.

3. The system of claim 1, further comprising a knowledge base system that updates the information contained in the knowledge base automatically based on purchaser information or provider information input to the system previously.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the knowledge base is automatically updated based on expert input.

5. The system of claim 2, further comprising a timer that allocates a pre-determined time to complete at least one of the multiple steps.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the scoring system scores a pair of provider information and order information based on a predetermined formula.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the formula includes weighting factors depending on the importance of pre-determined criteria.

8. The system of claim 1, further comprising a correction system that corrects the scores provided by the scoring system based on correction factors from interviewing, objective testing or reference checking.

9. The system of claim 1, further comprising a reporting system that sends messages to purchasers regarding the status of the order in the system, or to providers regarding the status of the virtual provider in the system.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein the reporting system sends an alarm to a purchaser or provider indicating that a pre-determined time period has lapsed without requisite action from the purchaser or provider.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the alarm is sent to the purchaser, the provider or an operator of the system, the alarm is classified as either a warning or urgent, and the individual recipient of the alarm is dependent on whether that recipient has access to warnings or urgent alarms.

12. The system of claim 1 wherein the purchaser is a prospective employer and the provider is a prospective employee or independent contractor.

13. The system of claim 1, further comprising:  
an accounting database to store information regarding the number of providers that have been matched with a purchaser; and  
a billing system that bills the purchaser based on the information in the accounting database, based on the number of orders during a period of time or based on the number of steps that have been performed.

14. The system of claim 1, further comprising:  
a purchaser input system for the purchaser to input information into the system; and  
a provider input system for the provider to input information into the system.

15. The system of claim 2 wherein the sequencing system provides a default list of the contents of a step.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein the default list is modified by the purchaser.

17. A system wherein at least one purchaser places an order for at least one provider, and purchasers and providers are matched through multiple steps according to desired criteria, the system comprising:

    a data storage device to receive purchaser information that specifies purchaser criteria, provider information that specifies provider criteria and order information which specifies the purchaser's criteria for that particular order;

    a knowledge base containing information on which to base requests for information by the system to obtain the purchaser information, the provider information and/or the order information;

    a virtual provider that is created by matching provider information of a particular provider with order information of a particular order;

    a scoring system that compares the provider information and the order information for the virtual provider and that provides a score reflecting the degree of matching between the criteria of the provider information and the order information;

    a management system that tracks the virtual provider through the multiple steps; and

    a sequencing system that specifies the contents of each step, the contents at least including instructions to the purchaser regarding the input of additional purchaser information or to the provider regarding the input of additional provider information.

18. The system of claim 17, further comprising a correction system that corrects the scores provided by the scoring subsystem based on correction factors from interviewing, objective testing or reference checking.

19. The system of claim 17, wherein the additional purchaser information comprises interview or test requests for information and the additional provider information comprises responses to the requests for information.

20. The system of claim 17, further comprising a reporting system that sends messages to purchasers regarding the status of the order in the system, or to providers regarding the status of the virtual provider in the system.

21. The system of claim 1 wherein the requests for information may comprise questionnaires or application forms, and content of the requests for information are based on responses to previous requests for information.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein the requests for information are organized in a plurality of levels so that the response to one or more requests for information in a one level generates one or more requests for information in another level.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein the requests for information are organized into at least three levels.

24. The system of claim 8 wherein interviewing occurs through an animated or other automated character that speaks requests for information.

25. The system of claim 8 further comprising a device to accept verbal responses, and wherein responses to requests for information are provided verbally and

the system converts the verbal responses to digital form for use in scoring or to generate additional requests for information.

26. The system of claim 14 wherein the knowledge base is updated automatically further comprising a reporting system to advise purchasers or providers when the knowledge base is updated, and wherein purchasers or providers input additional information in the system in response to the knowledge base updates.

27. The system of claim 26 wherein purchasers or providers are billed for inputting the additional information.

28. The system of claim 1 wherein the scoring system determines the score based on the degree of clustering of keywords in the provider's resume or free-text responses to requests for information.